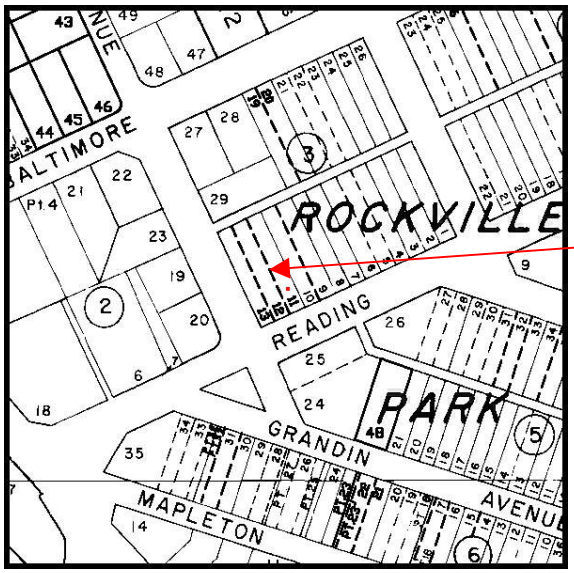
CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT

August 19, 2004
MEETING NO. 09-04

APPLICATION: HDC2004-00309

DATE FILED: July 22, 2004

APPLICANT/ OWNER: Carl Bretscher
300 Reading Ave.
Rockville, MD 20850



PROPERTY DESCRIPTION:
The Carey and Hattie Kingdon House is a rectangular frame, 2 ½-story house that sits on three lots at the corner of Reading and Grandin Avenues in the Rockville Park subdivision (Lots 11,12, and 13, Block 3 of Reading Avenue). It was built c. 1888 and designated as a single site historic district in 2001. It is zoned R-60-HD and the lot contains 12,750 square feet.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS AT THIS ADDRESS:
MAP2001-00071 Single Site Historic District designation
December 18, 2003 Courtesy Review for dormer and attic window replacements

REQUEST: The applicant requests a Certificate of Approval to 1) add a dormer on the east side to accommodate a new stairway to the attic and 2) to replace attic windows with larger windows on the east and west sides.

Front façade 300 Reading Avenue, faces south

East facade

East façade, proposed dormer location

East gable with attic windows

West facade

West gable with attic windows

1. ***Historic, archeological, or architectural value and significance of the site or structure and its relationship to the historic, archeological, or architectural significance of the surrounding area.***

The property at 300 Reading Avenue was designated as a single site historic district as an example of period architecture and for illustrating the development of East Rockville and its founding families. From 1911 to 1977, 300 Reading Avenue was associated with the Kingdon family who was active in Rockville civic affairs and built two homes in the late 19th century on Reading Avenue in the newly developed Rockville Park. This home is an excellent example of the local building style in an intact neighborhood. It reflects the development of Rockville that occurred in the last quarter of the 19th century near the new B&O railroad station.

The Carey and Hattie Kingdon House features prominent shingled gables, a full-width front porch with Doric columns, and a two-story rear kitchen wing and an enclosed one-story porch addition on the rear. It retains its essential architectural character and original details.

2. The relationship of the exterior architectural features of the structure to the remainder of the entire structure and to the surrounding area.

The cross-gable massing of this house is distinctive, with the prominent coved cornice providing the emphasis on the front gable. The roof of the main block is cross gable with an equally large front gable and a smaller rear gable. Each cross gable end has a pair of non-original attic windows (as noted in the MHT form). The gable ends are sided with butt end shingles. The gable ends are open, but sit on prominent stringers just above the second story window casings. The front gable has at its base a broad projecting cove cornice, made of smooth horizontal boards, which sits atop the three second story windows. The pediment above is closed, covered with scalloped wood shingles and includes a single horizontal attic window. This unusual cornice gives the illusion of added height to the front elevation. There are plain brackets at the lower corners of the gable valleys.

The siding on the bulk of the house is overlapping clapboards. The main roof is asphalt shingle but the roofs of the front and west rear porches are clad with red embossed tin shingles. The one-over-one double hung sash windows and their shutters appear to be original. Some of the smaller windows may not be original (including the attic windows) and do not have shutters.

The attic is currently unfinished and dark and has limited ventilation. The applicant would like to improve the interior space for use as a children's playroom and possibly eventually as an extra bedroom or guest room by enlarging the attic windows in the east and west gable ends and improving access to the attic with a new staircase and a dormer to accommodate the required headroom for the stairs.

3. *The general compatibility of exterior design, scale, proportion, arrangement, texture, and materials proposed to be used.*

The proposed replacement windows in the attic on the east and west sides of the house would be the same width as the existing attic windows (paired windows, 5 feet total width), but they would be more than twice as long (approximately 5 feet instead of 2 feet long), one over one double hung windows as exist elsewhere on the house. The applicant wishes to admit more light and improve air circulation in the attic. According to the MHT form prepared in 2001, the existing attic windows are not original. The proposed windows would match the proportions of the existing windows on the house, as well as matching trim details and dimensions.

There is sufficient space in the gables for enlargement of the attic windows. Replacement of old windows is not generally encouraged and the applicant has acknowledged that he is open to alternative suggestions. The attic is expected to be used as a children's playroom for the near future, and possibly as a bedroom in the more distant future. Egress would be a code issue only if the attic were to be used as a sleeping area. The HDC may consider other options for increasing light and ventilation that would not require replacement of the windows.

The proposed shed dormer is needed to provide sufficient headroom above planned new attic stairs. It would be located on the east roof panel of the rear ell and would be minimally visible from the rights-of-way (Grandin and Reading Avenues). The applicant has provided two options for the roof pitch on the proposed dormer (see floor plan with application). Example 1 moves the ridgeline back one foot and allows a 2/12 pitch. Moving the ridgeline back 2 feet, as shown in example 2, allows for a 4/12 pitch. Both provide the required headroom for the interior staircase landing. The width of the dormer will be 5 to 6 feet, or the minimum width necessary for the stairway headroom.

At the December 2003 courtesy review for this project, the HDC had concerns about the proposed massing and roof pitch of the dormer but the roof pitch was not identified in that hand drawing. At the courtesy review, the HDC requested a floor plan, better drawings, and an explanation of how the attic space is intended to be used, all of which the applicant has provided with this application.

The roof on the proposed dormer will be asphalt shingle to match the existing roof and the siding will match the existing clapboard. According to the drawings, there will be one 4 over 1 double hung window in the dormer which will match the window immediately below it.

4. To any other factors, including aesthetic factors, which the Commission deems to be pertinent.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the HDC approve HDC2004-00309 to add a dormer on the rear east side of the house to accommodate a new stairway to the attic to meet code requirements. The HDC should identify the preferred roof pitch of the proposed dormer. The roof of the dormer must match the existing asphalt roof and the window must match existing windows on the house.

If the attic window replacement is approved by the HDC, the new windows must match the other double hung windows on the first and second stories of the house in terms of material and must be surrounded by matching trim. Per Building Code, the windows are required to have an opening area of at least 5.7 square feet if the room is to be used as a bedroom. In addition, the net clear openable height dimension must be at least 24 inches and the net clear openable width dimension must be a minimum of 20 inches. The minimum required net clear opening must be accomplished by the normal operation of the window, without removing the sash. (Note: an opening with both minimum dimensions of 24 inches by 20 inches does not provide the required opening area of 5.7 square feet.)